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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MARY DUDLEY RECEIVES NOAA ENVIRONMENTAL HERO AWARD**

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) selected Mary Dudley of Boise, Idaho as one of this year's NOAA Environmental Hero Award recipients. The award recognizes Dudley for developing an outstanding volunteer-driven habitat restoration program, and pioneering new techniques in stream-side planting to benefit salmon and water quality.

Held in conjunction with Earth Day celebrations, the award honors NOAA partners for their "tireless efforts to preserve and protect our nation's environment." Mary is the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Volunteer Coordinator. Since 1990, Mary has provided a link between conservation-minded Idaho citizens of all ages and backgrounds and ecologically meaningful wetland and stream-side volunteer restoration opportunities. Dudley's crews have planted more than 500,000 native plants, and have supported these efforts with careful maintenance and monitoring.

Dudley has pioneered experimental planting techniques that maximize the success of plants in the unique and sometimes challenging conditions of Southwest Idaho. She has also taught volunteers these techniques.

Dudley's work is enabling state and federal agencies to accomplish restoration on private lands that were previously inaccessible. Through Dudley's program, which involves members of the local communities where projects are taking place, some landowners have opened their gates and become partners in river bank restoration efforts.

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The NOAA Restoration Center and the Northwest Region of NOAA Fisheries became involved with Dudley's program in 2002, when she applied for, and received, a grant through the Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). Dudley is currently working under two NOAA Restoration Center grants to restore habitat for salmon populations listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

"We are delighted to support the efforts of these volunteers and private landowners in restoring these areas," said Bob Lohn, NOAA Fisheries regional administrator for the Northwest Region. "These restoration projects, and the community participation they inspire, will be essential components in the recovery of these species in the Columbia Basin."

"NOAA and the nation are fortunate to have such dedicated people volunteer so much of their time," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "They set a fine example for others to follow in their communities. America needs more environmental heroes like them."

Established in 1995 to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, the Environmental Hero award is presented to individuals and organizations that volunteer their time and energy to help NOAA carry out its mission.

"On behalf of the 12,500 men and women working for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, I am pleased to present you with this 2004 Environmental Hero Award," Lautenbacher wrote in a letter to the recipients. "Your dedicated efforts and outstanding accomplishments greatly benefit the environment and make our nation a better place for all Americans."

There are a total of 33 winners—30 individuals and three organizations. Visit the NOAA Earth Day Web site at <http://www.noaa.gov/earthday> to read more about this year's award winners.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>